

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A method of controlling a process performed by a semiconductor processing tool, comprising:

inputting process data relating to an actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool;

inputting a first principles physical model including a set of computer-encoded differential equations, the first principles physical model describing at least one of a basic physical or chemical attribute of the semiconductor processing tool;

performing first principles simulation for the actual process being performed using the physical model to provide a first principles simulation result in accordance with the process data relating to the actual process being performed in order to simulate the actual process being performed; and

using the first principles simulation result to control the actual process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 2 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 1, wherein said inputting process data comprises directly inputting the data relating to the actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool from at least one of a physical sensor and a metrology tool physically mounted on the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 1, wherein said inputting process data comprises indirectly inputting the data relating to the actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool from at least one of a manual input device and a database.

Claim 4 (Original): The method of Claim 3, wherein said indirectly inputting comprises inputting data recorded from a process previously performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 5 (Original): The method of Claim 3, wherein said indirectly inputting comprises inputting data set by a simulation operator.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 1, wherein said inputting process data comprises inputting data relating to at least one of the physical characteristics of the semiconductor processing tool and the semiconductor tool environment.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 1, wherein said inputting process data comprises inputting data relating to at least one of a characteristic and a result of a process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 8 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said inputting a first principles physical model comprises inputting a spatially resolved model of the geometry of the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 9 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said inputting a first principles physical model comprises inputting fundamental equations necessary to perform first principles simulation for a desired simulation result.

Claim 10 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said performing first principles simulation comprises performing first principles simulation concurrently with the process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 11 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said performing first principles simulation comprises performing first principles simulation independent of the process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 12 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said performing first principles simulation comprises using the input data to set a boundary condition of the first principles simulation model.

Claim 13 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said performing first principles simulation comprises using the input data to set an initial condition of the first principles simulation model.

Claim 14 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said using the first principles simulation result comprises using the first principles simulation result to perform at least one of detecting, and classifying a fault in the process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 15 (Original): The method of Claim 1, further comprising using a network of interconnected resources to perform at least one of the process steps recited in Claim 1.

Claim 16 (Original): The method of Claim 15, further comprising using code parallelization among interconnected computational resources to share the computational load of the first principles simulation.

Claim 17 (Original): The method of Claim 15, further comprising sharing simulation information among interconnected resources to control the process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 18 (Original): The method of Claim 17, wherein said sharing simulation information comprises distributing simulation results among the interconnected resources to reduce redundant execution of substantially similar first principles simulations by different resources.

Claim 19 (Original): The method of Claim 17, wherein said sharing simulation information comprises distributing model changes among the interconnected resources to reduce redundant refinements of first principles simulations by different resources.

Claim 20 (Original): The method of Claim 15, further comprising using remote resources via a wide area network to control the semiconductor process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 21 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 20, wherein said using remote resources comprises using at least one of remote computational and storage resources via a wide area network to facilitate the semiconductor process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 22 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said performing first principles simulation utilizes at least one of an ANSYS computer code, a FLUENT computer code, a CFRDC-ACE computer code, and a direct simulation Monte Carlo computer code.

Claim 23 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said performing first principles simulation comprises:

calculating a solution to the first principles simulation by applying a close-fitting solution to thereby set initial conditions for cells in the first principles simulation.

Claim 24 (Original): The method of Claim 23, wherein said calculating comprises:
selecting said close-fitting solution from a library of solutions.

Claim 25 (Original): The method of Claim 24, wherein said selecting comprises:
selecting a solution from the library of solutions that has proven convergence on the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 26 (Original): The method of Claim 23, wherein said selecting comprises:
selecting said close-fitting solution from a library of solutions existing on a network of computers connected to said semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 27 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said performing first principles simulation comprises:
calculating a solution to the first principles simulation by choosing a coarse grid for solution to the first principles simulation.

Claim 28 (Original): The method of Claim 27, wherein said calculating a solution further comprises:

utilizing the solution of the coarse grid to set initial conditions for cells in a subsequent first principles simulation using a fine grid.

Claim 29 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said using the first principles simulation result to control the process comprises:

performing a principle components analysis to determine a relationship between spatial components of said first principles simulation result for the semiconductor processing tool and a set of at least one control variable, said relationship utilized to determine a correction to said set of at least one control variable in order to affect a reduction in the magnitude of said spatial components.

Claim 30 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said using the first principles simulation result to control comprises:

controlling at least one of a material processing system, an etch system, a photoresist spin coating system, a lithography system, a dielectric coating system, a deposition system, a rapid thermal processing system for thermal annealing, and a batch diffusion furnace.

Claim 31 (Original): The method of Claim 30, wherein said using the first principles simulation result to control comprises:

controlling at least one of a chemical vapor deposition system and a physical vapor deposition system.

Claim 32 (Original): The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

inputting as tool data at least one of etch rate, deposition rate, etch selectivity, an etch critical dimension, an etch feature anisotropy, a film property, a plasma density, an ion energy, a concentration of a chemical specie, a photoresist mask film thickness, a photoresist pattern dimension.

Claim 33 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said inputting data comprises:

inputting physical geometric parameters of at least one of a material processing system, an etch system, a photoresist spin coating system, a lithography system, a dielectric coating system, a deposition system, a rapid thermal processing system for thermal annealing, and a batch diffusion furnace.

Claim 34 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said using the first principles simulation result to control comprises:

controlling the semiconductor processing tool by using model output to adjust said process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 35 (Original): The method of Claim 34, wherein said controlling comprises:

utilizing at least one of nonlinear optimization and multivariate analysis to derive a control model for process control.

Claim 36 (Original): The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

exchanging information between a plurality of computing/storage devices including at least one of model solver parameters, solution status to the first principles simulation, model

solutions to the first principles simulation, and solution convergence history for said model solutions.

Claim 37 (Original): The method of Claim 1, further comprising:
inspecting process results; and
providing input to the first principles simulation for calibration purposes.

Claim 38 (Currently Amended): A system comprising:
a semiconductor processing tool configured to perform a process;
an input device configured to input data relating to an actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool; and
a first principles simulation processor configured to:
input a first principles physical model including a set of computer-encoded differential equations describing at least one of a basic physical or chemical attribute of the semiconductor processing tool, and
perform first principles simulation for the actual process being performed using the physical model to provide a first principles simulation result in accordance with the process data relating to the actual process being performed in order to simulate the actual process being performed, wherein said first principles simulation result is used to control the actual process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 39 (Original): The system of Claim 38, wherein said input device comprises at least one of a physical sensor and a metrology tool physically mounted on the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 40 (Original): The system of Claim 38, wherein said input device comprises at least one of a manual input device and a database.

Claim 41 (Original): The system of Claim 40, wherein said input device is configured to input data recorded from a process previously performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 42 (Original): The system of Claim 40, wherein said input device is configured to input data set by a simulation operator.

Claim 43 (Original): The system of Claim 38, wherein said input device is configured to input data relating to at least one of the physical characteristics of the semiconductor processing tool and the semiconductor tool environment.

Claim 44 (Original): The system of Claim 38, wherein said input device is configured to input data relating to at least one of a characteristic and a result of a process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 45 (Original): The system of Claim 38, wherein said processor is configured to input a first principles physical model comprising a spatially resolved model of the geometry of the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 46 (Original): The system of Claim 38, wherein said processor is configured to input a first principles physical model comprising fundamental equations necessary to perform first principles simulation for a desired simulation result.

Claim 47 (Original): The system of Claim 38, wherein said processor is configured to perform said first principles simulation concurrently with the process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 48 (Original): The system of Claim 38, wherein said processor is configured to perform said first principles simulation not concurrently with the process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 49 (Original): The system of Claim 38, wherein said processor is configured to perform said first principles simulation at least by using the input data to set a boundary condition of the first principles simulation model.

Claim 50 (Original): The system of Claim 38, wherein said processor is configured to perform said first principles simulation at least by using the input data to set an initial condition of the first principles simulation model.

Claim 51 (Original): The system of Claim 38, wherein said processor is configured to use the first principles simulation result to perform at least one of detecting, and classifying a fault in the process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 52 (Original): The system of Claim 38, further comprising a network of interconnected resources connected to said processor and configured to assist said processor in performing at least one of the inputting a first principles simulation model and performing a first principles simulation.

Claim 53 (Original): The system of Claim 52, wherein said network of interconnected resources is configured to use code parallelization with said processor to share the computational load of the first principles simulation.

Claim 54 (Original): The system of Claim 52, wherein said network of interconnected resources is configured to share simulation information with said processor to facilitate said process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 55 (Original): The system of Claim 54, wherein said network of interconnected resources is configured to distribute simulation results to said processor to reduce redundant execution of substantially similar first principles simulations.

Claim 56 (Original): The system of Claim 54, wherein said network of interconnected resources is configured to distribute model changes to said processor to reduce redundant refinements of first principles simulations.

Claim 57 (Original): The system of Claim 52, further comprising remote resources connected to said processor via a wide area network and configured to facilitate the semiconductor process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 58 (Original): The system of Claim 57, wherein said remote resources comprise at least one of a computational and a storage resource.

Claim 59 (Original): The system of Claim 38, wherein said processor is configured to perform first principles simulation utilizes at least one of an ANSYS computer code, a FLUENT computer code, a CFRDC-ACE computer code, and a direct simulation Monte Carlo computer code.

Claim 60 (Original): The system of Claim 38, wherein said processor is configured to perform first principles simulation at least by calculating a solution to the first principles simulation by applying a close-fitting solution to thereby set initial conditions for cells in the first principles simulation.

Claim 61 (Original): The system of Claim 60, wherein said processor is configured to perform said calculating by at least selecting said close-fitting solution from a library of solutions.

Claim 62 (Original): The system of Claim 61, wherein said processor is configured to perform said selecting by at least selecting a solution from the library of solutions that has proven convergence on the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 63 (Original): The system of Claim 60, wherein said processor is configured to perform said selecting by at least selecting said close-fitting solution from a library of solutions existing on a network of computers connected to said semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 64 (Original): The system of Claim 38, wherein said processor is configured to perform first principles simulation by at least calculating a solution to the first principles simulation by choosing a coarse grid for solution to the first principles simulation.

Claim 65 (Original): The system of Claim 64, wherein said processor is configured to perform calculating a solution by at least utilizing the solution of the coarse grid to set initial conditions for cells in a subsequent first principles simulation using a fine grid.

Claim 66 (Original): The system of Claim 38, wherein said processor is configured to use the first principles simulation result to control the process by at least performing a principle components analysis to determine a relationship between spatial components of said first principles simulation result for the semiconductor processing tool and a set of at least one control variable, said relationship utilized to determine a correction to said set of at least one control variable in order to affect a reduction in the magnitude of said spatial components.

Claim 67 (Original): The system of Claim 38, wherein said processor is configured to use the first principles simulation result to control the process by at least controlling at least one of a material processing system, an etch system, a photoresist spin coating system, a lithography system, a dielectric coating system, a deposition system, a rapid thermal processing system for thermal annealing, and a batch diffusion furnace.

Claim 68 (Original): The system of Claim 67, wherein said processor is configured to use the first principles simulation result to control the process by controlling at least one of a chemical vapor deposition system and a physical vapor deposition system.

Claim 69 (Original): The system of Claim 38 wherein said input device is configured to input at least one of etch rate, deposition rate, etch selectivity, an etch critical dimension, an etch feature anisotropy, a film property, a plasma density, an ion energy, a concentration of a chemical specie, a photoresist mask film thickness, a photoresist pattern dimension.

Claim 70 (Original): The system of Claim 38, wherein said input device is configured to input physical geometric parameters of at least one of a material processing system, an etch system, a photoresist spin coating system, a lithography system, a dielectric coating system, a deposition system, a rapid thermal processing system for thermal annealing, and a batch diffusion furnace.

Claim 71 (Original): The system of Claim 38, wherein said processor is configured to use the first principles simulation result to control the process by at least controlling the semiconductor processing tool by using model output to adjust said process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 72 (Original): The system of Claim 71, wherein said processor configured to perform said controlling by utilizing at least one of nonlinear optimization and multivariate analysis to derive a control model for process control.

Claim 73 (Original): The system of Claim 38, wherein said processor is further configured to exchange information between a plurality of computing/storage devices including at least one of model solver parameters, solution status to the first principles

simulation, model solutions to the first principles simulation, and solution convergence history for said model solutions.

Claim 74 (Original): The system of Claim 38, wherein said processor is further configured to:

inspect process results; and
provide input to the first principles simulation for calibration purposes.

Claim 75 (Currently Amended): A system for facilitating a process performed by a semiconductor processing tool, comprising:

means for inputting process data relating to an actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool;

means for inputting a first principles physical model including a set of computer-encoded differential equations, the first principles physical model describing at least one of a basic physical or chemical attribute of the semiconductor processing tool;

means for performing first principles simulation for the actual process being performed using the physical model to provide a first principles simulation result in accordance with the process data relating to the actual process being performed in order to simulate the actual process being performed; and

means for using the first principles simulation result to control the actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 76 (Original): The system of Claim 75, further comprising means for sharing the computational load of the first principles simulation.

Claim 77 (Original): The system of Claim 75, further comprising means for sharing simulation information among interconnected resources to facilitate a process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 78 (Currently Amended): A computer readable medium containing program instructions for execution on a processor, which when executed by the computer system, cause the processor to perform the steps of:

inputting process data relating to an actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool;

inputting a first principles physical model including a set of computer-encoded differential equations, the first principles physical model describing at least one of a basic physical or chemical attribute of the semiconductor processing tool;

performing first principles simulation for the actual process being performed using the physical model to provide a first principles simulation result in accordance with the process data relating to the actual process being performed in order to simulate the actual process being performed; and

using the first principles simulation result to control the actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 79 (New): The method of Claim 1, wherein said performing a first principles simulation comprises:

providing for the first principles simulation a reuse of known solutions as initial conditions for the first principles simulation.

Claim 80 (New): The system of Claim 38, wherein the first principles simulator is configured to provide for the first principles simulation a reuse of known solutions as initial conditions for the first principles simulation.

Claim 81 (New): The system of Claim 74, wherein said means for performing a first principles simulation comprises:

means for providing for the first principles simulation a reuse of known solutions as initial conditions for the first principles simulation.